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INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0621  
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0558  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2163  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0968  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0636  
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0193  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0636  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1077

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NOUAKCHOTT 000312

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KPAO](#) [PHUM](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR THE WEEK OF  
APRIL 26-30

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 306

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 308

[1](#)C. NOUAKCHOTT 83

[1](#)D. 08 NOUAKCHOTT 629

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: This week in Nouakchott, anti-coup protests multiplied and the FNDD, labor unions, and civil society joined forces through the signature of NDI's CFD Charter, which earned them criticism from Ould Daddah for accepting foreign money and interference. Deputy Sid'Ahmed Ould Ahmed organized a majority parliamentary sit-in to protest "US interference." Two high-ranking officers were arrested, and government vehicles were burned. While mediation initiatives went nowhere, the Constitutional Council published a final list of presidential candidates. A Mauritanian judge ruled out little Hana Ould Maria's slavery case and two anti-coup mayors were removed from office. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Mauritians march in Paris: Mauritians marched in Paris on April 25 to demand justice for the victims of the "passif humanitaire" and called for a return to constitutional order in Mauritania. They also called for four current members of the High State Council to face justice for their alleged roles in the "passif humanitaire":  
- General Mohamed Ould Hadi, for his alleged role in the massacres of Jreida  
- Colonel Ahmedou Bamba Ould Baye, for allegedly killing Afro-Mauritanian lieutenant Yaya Sarr  
- Colonel Mohamed Ould Meguett, for allegedly killing Afro-Mauritanian lieutenant Dia Ousmane  
- Colonel Mohamed Ould Znagui, for allegedly torturing Afro-Mauritanian military personnel

[1](#)3. (U) Democratic women stage permanent protest: The women of the FNDD have started a permanent protest site (by erecting a tent) at UNAD headquarters in Nouakchott and plan to protest until the coup is overturned. (Note: The UNAD party, formerly known as PND, is the party of FNDD co-leader Abdel Koudouss Abeidna. End note.)

[1](#)4. (U) Vehicles burn: Four government vehicles were burned the evening of April 24 followed by a fifth vehicle -- owned

by a military doctor -- on April 25. Nobody has claimed these acts of vandalism, and the FNDD was quick to release a communique condemning the acts. The junta was equally quick to blame the FNDD and other anti-coup actors.

15. (U) Sit-in at the Senate: On April 26, FNDD and RFD parliamentarians attempted to organize a sit-in at the Senate, but the police prevented them from entering the building.

16. (C) Arrests of army officers: On April 27 two colonels were arrested, supposedly for "mismanaging funds." Colonel Mekhalla Ould Dellali commanded the Jreida battalion, located 30 kilometers to the north of Nouakchott. Colonel Moctar Ould Lekhal commanded a unit in Zouerate tasked with protecting the borders with Algeria and Western Sahara. Comment: "Mismanaging funds" is hardly a rare offense within the armed services. The arrest of two prominent colonels has only increased speculation that the two colonels were up to something. The unit at Jreida is well-equipped and well-trained (by Mauritanian standards), and is probably the only unit in the country that could mount a serious challenge to the Presidential Security Battalion (BASEP). End comment.

17. (SBU) Opposition signs Coordination of Democratic Forces (CFD) Charter and Mauritians accuse the US of interference: On April 28 a group of civil society organizations, labor unions, and the FNDD signed the Coordination of Democratic Forces Charter stating their intent to oppose the coup and restore constitutional order in Mauritania through peaceful

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and legal means. The initiative was not devoid of criticism.

Ahmed Ould Daddah, President of the RFD, labeled the CFD a U.S. Embassy initiative and denounced the FNDD for accepting funding from foreign governments. Ould Daddah confirmed to Charge he had made the comment but said he had not intended to make a big issue of it -- he accused the press of using his comments to create a divide between him and the FNDD.

(Note: The initiative is actually an NDI initiative, not a U.S. Embassy initiative -- a distinction lost in the press. End note.) An article in the Arabic press and in local newspaper Le Renovateur took things one step further, accusing the U.S. Embassy of funneling money from the Israelis to the FNDD via the CFD, the reasoning being that the Israelis were eager to get back at Aziz in retaliation for severing relations. On April 30, Deputy Sid'Ahmed Ould Ahmed organized a majority parliamentary sit-in to protest "U.S. interference practices" (See septel).

18. (C) Women against the coup: PolOff and PolAsst met April 26 with RFD Deputy Nana Mint Cheikhna, who participated in the women's peaceful protest that was violently broken-up by the police. Mint Cheikhna stated her intent to continue resisting the coup by all legal means. She reaffirmed plans for an "active boycott" of the June 6 elections should they proceed forward, noting that Aziz was in a hurry to get the elections over with so he could be crowned "president." Like many anti-coup political actors these days, she raised the specter of possible civil war if a consensual solution to the crisis was not found, adding that "we were better off in the 60's and 70's than we are now." Cheikhna highlighted the importance and growing role of women on the political scene, saying they were "out in front, pushing people to move forward."

19. (C) Meeting with CNCD/EN: Charge and PolAsst met April 27 with Mahmoudi Ould Saiboutt, president of the PMJD party, and Mohamed Ould Nahah, president of the Rassemblement Populaire party. They are members of the CNCD/EN ("National Coordination for the Consolidation of Democracy/New Era") -- yet another initiative to solving the crisis. They expressed anti-coup sentiments, but when pressed as to why they did not just join the FNDD, they offered a vague argument relating to their complaints about what happened to Mauritians in Senegal during the late 80s/early 90s (a type of reverse

"passif humanitaire"). They claimed that Aziz had a well-equipped unit on standby in Akjoujt (his hometown) ready to respond in case of any trouble such as a counter-coup. They also stated (and numerous media outlets have reported) that money was paid to the three other presidential candidates by junta supporters. Finally, they said that Aziz was planning to break relations with the U.S. after the June 6 elections. Comment: Clearly political lightweights, their political parties have no real following or influence. Their difficulty in remembering the name of their own initiative during the meeting is indicative of the flood of "mediations" and "initiatives" floating around these days. End comment. The standard meeting took on greater significance when the two politicians decided to issue a press release on the content of their conversation with the Charge. While no doubt trying to build their own credibility, their portrayal of the Charge's negative remarks against the regime soon became a local internet sensation with multiple calls for the Charge to be PNGed (while others noted the Charge's comments were an accurate description of the political situation).

¶10. (C) Ould Bettah's initiative fails: PolOff met April 28 with Mahfoudh Ould Bettah, who earlier in the week announced the failure of his mediation initiative. Ould Betta stated the mediation failed mostly because the military was not open to dialogue.

¶11. (U) Final candidate list: The Constitutional Council published on April 29 the final list of presidential candidates. Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz will be running against Kane Hamidou Baba (Afro-Mauritanian), Ibrahima Moctar Sarr (Afro-Mauritanian) and Sghair Ould M'Bareck (Haratine).

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¶12. (C) President Abdallahi postpones trip to Senegal: Charge and PolOff met April 28 with FNDD's Mohamed Ould Maouloud about President Abdallahi's planned trip to Senegal (Ref A).

¶13. (U) Police disperse Supreme Court sit-in demonstration: April 29, police used batons and tear-gas to disperse a demonstration calling for the liberation of deposed Prime Minister Yahya Ould Ahmed Waghef and others accused of corruption in the Air Mauritanie scandal. For the opposition, these accusations were motivated by political reasons. Several political figures, including the mayor of Tidjikja, Mohamed Ould Biha (Ref D), were injured during the demonstration and taken to the hospital.

¶14. (C) Judge rules out little Hana's slavery case: PolOff met April 28 with Biram Ould Dah, SOS Esclaves member, to inquire about the latest slavery case. Ould Dah explained that SOS Esclaves had received a tip stating that 10-year old Hana Mint Maria lived in slavery with a family in Nouakchott. SOS Esclaves tried to liberate Hana, who works as a house servant, sleeps in the verandah, does not know how to read or write, and showed obvious signs of sexual abuse. Nevertheless, the judge brokered an agreement between Hana's mother, also a slave, and Hana's masters, and then ruled that the "slavery case" was nothing more than a "family affair" because Hana was the slave-masters' niece and had been put in their charge by her mother. The judge ruled Hana should remain with her "aunt and uncle". Biram denounced the judge's utter disregard for anti-slavery laws and for the Children's Legal Protection Code that protects children from sexual abuse, mistreatment, and endangerment.

¶15. (C) Meeting with Senator Sylla: PolAsst met April 30 with Senator Sylla (Ref B).

¶16. (C) Mayors removed from office: The anti-coup mayors of Nema and Sava were forced out of office by their respective town councils this week. Local media reported that the councils had been paid off by junta supporters in exchange for ousting their mayors and replacing them with people more

sympathetic to Aziz. Nema mayor Vadily Ould Ahmed had been a strong critic of the coup, and had already fought off several other attempts to remove him from his post (Ref C).

HANKINS